

MINUTES
CORNISH PLANNING BOARD
AUGUST 6, 2026

The Cornish Planning Board met on Thursday, August 6, 2026, 7:00 p.m., at the Cornish Town Offices. Members present were Bill Lipfert, Chair, Everett Cass, Jonathan Glass, and Gillian Goodwin; Linda Rice, Alternate; and Dillon Gallagher, Selectman. In the absence of Heidi Jaarsma, Bill Lipfert also served as Secretary.

Bill Lipfert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Master Plan Update

Gillian Goodwin said that the draft Natural & Scenic Resources chapter is complete and will be circulated to the Board for review.

Bill Lipfert solicited comments on the draft Transportation chapter.

Gillian identified a few terms that should be changed to simpler definitions. She asked about recommending a solution for the bicycle wheels caught in highway/railroad grade crossing issue. Bill replied that education and better signage were the only practicable solutions.

Dillon said that use of the Cornish-Windsor Covered Bridge parking area for public transportation is inadvisable given that the parking area requires maintenance, that the northbound bus would need to cross southbound traffic to pick up passengers and that parking at the location requires backing into traffic to leave. He feels that the Route 120 recommendation is okay.

Dillon noted that the Select Board and Road Agent are working on a Draft Pavement Management Plan. This may be expanded to all Town-maintained roads in the future.

Dillon asked that the “Temporary Road Advisory Committee” be referred to as such. He said the Select Board agrees that a permanent committee is inadvisable; the Road Agent needs full latitude to manage. The Town-wide culvert inventory is on pause.

Any references to “global warming” should be changed to “climate change.”

Following up on one of Gillian’s comments, “squashed culvert” should be changed to “large culvert.”

Dillon asked about the listed of potential scenic road additions; Bill noted that this was recycled from the 2009 Master Plan. Dillon feels the Planning Board should devote time to review and discuss this list.

Dillon requested that the current applicability of the cited RSA 238 language be checked; Bill will do this.

Dillon asked about Town standards for new roads. Bill stated that they need to be constructed to Class V standards for which NHDOT has specifications. Bill will add language to this effect,

including the “three or more houses served” trigger (as part of Subdivision Regulations) for private roads in Town.

Dillon discussed the Town highway budget section. He suggested consideration of payments into the Paving Capital Reserve rather than funds coming out. Bill said this could be misleading. Dillon and Bill agreed that the table should be reworked to show actual expenditures. This means 2026 will be blank or could be shown with a footnote indicating “Authorized, not actual expenditures”.

Review of Open Space Conservation Plan recommendations.

The Board reviewed the Conservation Plan with a focus on Recommendations #27 to #37 that pertain to the Master Plan, the Cornish Zoning Ordinance and Planning Board priorities. Gillian noted that the Conservation Plan has lots of useful information for use in the new Master Plan’s Natural & Scenic Resources Chapter.

The Board agreed that any suggestions to revise the 2009 Master Plan were counter-productive, taking time away from the urgent need to complete a new Master Plan.

The Board agreed that any suggestions that the Planning Board undertake new studies were impractical given the lack of budget and other urgent priorities of the Board.

Dillon expressed concern about enforcement of many of the proposed additional Town Zoning Ordinance provisions. The Select Board, responsible for enforcing the Zoning Ordinance, has limited time for review, inspection and approval. He noted, for example, the Conservation Plan recommendation to replace some setbacks with vegetated buffers. How would this be enforced? For any recommended Zoning Ordinance changes, the Conservation Commission should provide model ordinance language from a peer town where the Select Board serves as sole enforcer of the Zoning Ordinance. For the purpose of determining peers, examples include Croydon and Piermont. Plainfield is not a peer as it has paid staff performing Zoning Ordinance and Building Permit enforcement.

Regarding recommendations to provide resources (Items 30/31/32/33), the Planning Board cannot provide recommendations or resources pursuant to its statutory obligations. The Conservation Commission may wish to serve as such a clearing house.

Recommendation 34, sixth bullet, is a DES issue – not a Planning Board issue.

The Board expressed concern that Recommendation 34, eighth bullet, requiring that the soils survey be performed by a registered professional, would unnecessarily add costs to all subdivision applications. This would increase the cost of subdivided lots, running counter to Town affordability concerns.

The Board found that Recommendation 36, and its suggested sampling of water quality, is a good assignment for the Conservation Commission. Neither the Select Board nor the Planning Board are in a position to support such a program.

Other Business

Dillon provided an update on the Parsonage Road driveway permit situation. He noted that there continued to be unpermitted camping on the property. He noted that no new driveway permit application has been filed despite Planning Board requirements for this. Therefore, no building permit will be issued and no 911 address filing will take place until the revised driveway permit has been filed, approved and all conditions met. He noted that modular housing is already there. Select Board will follow up with the property owner.

The property owner has an approved septic design which was stamped by the Select Board.

Dillon has created draft revisions to the Cornish Driveway Regulations. He circulated proposed changes to the Board for review. He suggests a change in driveway regulations so that any newly-created shared driveway requires a Registry of Deeds recording (in the form of a plan) as a condition of final approval.

His proposed revisions introduce different types of driveways such as residential, commercial and agricultural.

His proposed revisions include a “approved with conditions” checkbox, which requires definition of conditions. There also needs to be a later sign off that conditions have been met, with signature lines for Planning Board and Road Agent.

Dillon noted that the regulations need to address paved driveways leading to gravel roads as this has caused maintenance issues for the Road Agent.

He proposes to include a sketch layout template with other driveway entrances nearby, abutters, north arrow, road names, etc.

Dillon noted that many of the proposed changes in the Driveway Regulations would require corresponding changes to the Driveway Permit Application. Dillon will draft these proposed changes and circulate to the Board for review.

Everett Cass made a motion to adjourn. Jonathan Glass seconded the motion, and the vote of the Board was in the affirmative, 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Lipfert